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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the efforts of the Taiwan government to establish a more comprehensive and effective guidance program for Taiwan's youth. It lists the six components involved in the development of this program, and describes several projects that have evolved out of this effort. The core of the "Six Year Project of School Guidance Work" was the establishment of school counseling and guidance work from elementary schools through to universities. The "Youth Guidance Project" is an extension of the "Six-Year Project." It hopes to improve on the guidance program by: (1) offering more activities for students; (2) making the whole program more effective by merging forces of all teachers and administrators; and (3) having more resources available by integrating resources from a variety of areas and campuses. The "Guidance Network System" is the computer system used to link all of Taiwan's schools and provides the central guidance database. There is hope that Internet technology holds a promising future for guidance and counseling workers. (JDM)

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INTEGRATION OF THE RESOURCES OF THE GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING VIA INTERNET: DEVELOPMENT OF THE " GUIDANCE NETWORK SYSTEM (GNS)" IN TAIWAN

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Introduction

Education is a priceless asset of fundamental importance to the individual and the society. In particular for Taiwan, a small island with a large number of people and limited natural resources, where the development of the nation highly depends upon the education of top quality human resources. However, along with the development of economy, the society of Taiwan has faced a big change in recent years. A high rate of youth crime and other social problems (see COGME, 1997) keep challenging our campuses, pressuring the government in Taiwan to develop a supplementary system to deal with the external influences and internal issues of education.

The need for Taiwan to develop a program of guidance was also proposed by another group of people who voice a reform in education. A national level committee, Educational Reform Committee of Executive Yuan, was found on September 21, 1994. Its mission is to pursue the construction of a new educational system. In addition to thinking in direction of innovation and substantial changes, many educators and professionals are called to a new world of learning and education without pressures and restrictions. Corresponding with the President Lee's address in May of 1996, a new generation of humanistic, creative, and content educators is gradually shaped in Taiwan's society. These are the major factors that drive the Ministry of Education to consider the establishment of a more comprehensive and effective guidance program which meets the needs of today's youth and the changing world.

SCHOOL GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING WORK IN TAIWAN

Beyond the general definition of guidance as a helping process (Shertzer & Stone, 1981), the guidance program under development in Taiwan has a particular emphasis on the construction and organization of the system. As a newly evolving policy, the designers and the decision-makers in the government put a great deal of attention on the reconstruction process of the schools. This policy not only has to take the adjustment of the school system into account, but also has to incorporate the ways in which the pupils are prepared to face a fast changing world. There are six components involved in the development of the guidance program in Taiwan:

1. An appraisal component for collecting and analyzing a variety of objective data about pupils and campus activities to achieve better understanding of pupils as well as develop appropriate programs to assist them.
2. An informational component for integrating a variety of guidance and counseling related resources to make the school counselors' and guidance teachers' activities and responsibilities easier and more effective. Furthermore, the students can obtain appropriate instructions and assistance via the guidance program.
3. A counseling component for providing an immediate psychological and academic aid to pupils, preventing the occurrence of delinquent behaviors, and developing a good interpersonal interaction and relations on campuses.
4. A consulting component designed to give technical assistance to teachers, administrators, and parents, while helping to improve the school as an organization.
5. A planning, placement, and follow-up component designed to assist students to make decisions on career development, to study on the psychological and cultural changes of our youth, and to utilize the national resources of guidance.
6. An evaluation component to determine the effectiveness of the guidance program and the administration procedures.

Taking the social development and the design of program described above into consideration, the Ministry of Education of Taiwan proposed a challenging project, "Six Year Project of School Guidance Work", which has made guidance operational and available to our educational system since 1991. Following and at the conclusion of the above mentioned project, another related project entitled "Youth Guidance Project" has been approved by the Executive Yuan of Taiwan to proceed with the construction of the guidance program.

"Six Year Project of School Guidance Work" (1991-1997)

The first systematic and formal development of school counseling and guidance work in Taiwan was the project entitle "Six Year Project of School Guidance Work" which began in 1991. According to the annual report of the police department obtained at the end of 1990, a youth related criminal incident took place at every twenty minute and twelve second interval. The grim conditions of youth related criminal activities has forced and continues to force the government to seriously consider the problems of campus safety and student development in the contemporary society. Hence in 1991, one of the most important national organizations, "The Six Year Plan of Nation Construction," rated the "Six Year Project of School Guidance Work" as their first priority, which was approved to run right away. By the end of June of 1996, more than $2,600,000,000 New Taiwanese dollars (equivalent to US $100,000,000) was used for this independent project. Historically, this is an innovative occurrence for the Ministry of Education to process a single project for a specific concern, which reflects Taiwan government's strong desire to reform and better the existing educational conditions in this country.

The core of the "Six Year Project of School Guidance Work" is the establishment of school counseling and guidance work from elementary schools to universities. Since 1991, thousands of school workers and administrators have been involved with this project to execute eighteen plans under the general purpose of:

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"Integrating family, school, society, and resources oversee to establish the system of counseling and guidance for synthesizing the efforts on the development of school counseling and guidance works and for preventing the occurrence of youth crimes, along with a final goal of the shaping of an excellent citizenship."

The six-year period of the project was divided into three stages: the first stage began in July of 1991 to June of 1993 with a goal of "fulfilling the human resources and equipment of counseling and guidance work to build a solid foundation"; the second stage was from July of 1993 to June of 1995 with a goal of "revising the related laws and policies, planning the evaluation system of school guidance work, and expanding the levels of influence"; and finally the last stage began in July of 1995 and will end in June of 1997 with the aim to finalize the project and to build a complete system of school counseling and guidance (Show, 1996).

One of the important plans in the project is the development of Internet-Guidance Network System (GNS). This system has as its aim to integrate a number of procedures; i.e., information, documents, activity records, research reports, and psychological tests; into a simple access network. It is of note that the GNS has the strong commitment of the Ministry of Education as well as the technical support of the Computer Center of the Ministry of Education. Therefore, the entire plan of the GNS could be made and approved in a short period of time. As predicted, the GNS is starting to show its utility both in sharing information as well as transferring information. As a result, the GNS is taken into serious consideration to be one of the sub-planners of the new six-year project (1997-2003) entitle "Youth Guidance Project".

"Youth Guidance Project" (1997-2003)

As part of a long-term commitment of government to the development of school guidance, the second six year plan, "Youth Guidance Project", proposed by the Ministry of Education has recently been supported by Executive Yuan. The Project will start to run in August of 1997 and will continue through 2003, with a total budge of 3,098,400,000 (equivalent to US $113,000,000) (Chen, 1996).

Consistent with the first six-year project, the purpose of "Youth Guidance Project" is "to integrate the resources of guidance and accomplish the important task of guidance in order to pursue a free and aptitude-based development for each student and prepare them for the contemporary society". To achieve these goals, three strategies are indicated in the Project: (a) more activities: creating models of guidance and pursuing the guidance activities on campuses in order to prevent the deviant behaviors of youth and to help the development of healthy mind and personality, (b) more effectiveness: promoting the global efficacy of school guidance by merging the forces of every teacher and administrator into a whole, (c) more resources: establishing the Guidance Network System by integrating the guidance resources of inside and outside various campuses. On the basis of the strategies listed above, a total of 19 sub-items were proposed for the Project.

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A: More Activities:

1. Provide mental health education
2. Prevent youth crime and campus violence
3. Execute the policy of one-to-one guidance
4. Help the middle withdrawal students back into the classroom
5. Provide equal opportunity for both genders and gender equal education
6. Offer parental education
7. Provide counseling and Career development

B: More effectiveness

1. Provide the inservice training to all teachers
2. Promote the guidance and counseling knowledge of classroom-teacher
3. Augment the school counseling centers' technical and other needed equipments
4. Increase the content and existing information on the subject of Guidance Activity
5. Execute the plan for "Providing a Full-Time School Counselor in each Junior High School"
6. Develop a new model of guidance and moral education

C: More effectiveness

1. Build the index of Youth Culture and Mental Health
2. Keep creating and revising the Guidance Network System (GNS)
3. Develop a new psychological and educational testing facility
4. Increase the availability and the activities of entertainment and recreation
5. Establish a consultant service system for school counselors
6. Execute a regular evaluation system of school guidance and counseling works

"GUIDANCE NETWORK SYSTEM (GNS)"

HISTORY

Similar to the other developed countries, the use of computer in Taiwan is becoming the core of the school administrative procedure. Especially, the computer network which is the most convenient way for linking Taiwan's thousands of schools with the educational administration institute. The earliest and most important network in the department of educational is the Taiwan Academic Network (TAN), which provides a space for exchanging all academic activities and information of Taiwan's higher education. Almost every university and college has a connection with TAN, which is able to further communicate with the world-wide network via Internet system.

To achieve the goal of the development of GNS, six tasks were listed:

1. Find a planning committee of GNS
2. Construct the GNS within each county
3. Construct the GNS between counties
4. Construct the GNS at a national level

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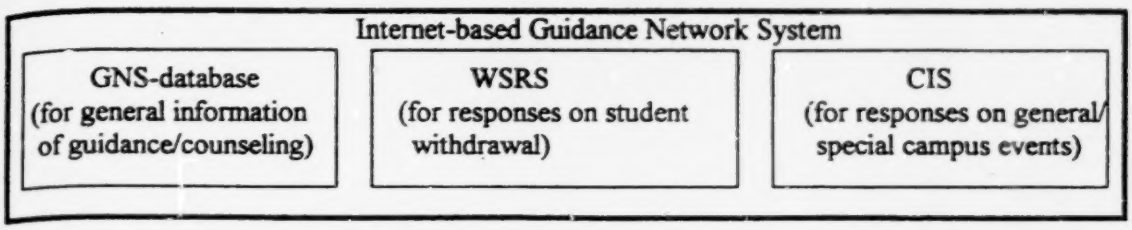
5. Set up a local center of the GNS at each academic level
6. Improve the effectiveness of the GNS

Considering the powerful communication function of Internet network, the federal level office of school guidance and counseling, the Council of Guidance and Moral Education, put numerous funds and resources into the establishment of GNS since 1992. Technically, GNS is a subsystem of TAN. In the early stage, GNS is designed as a central database of guidance and counseling activities and information. Since 1994, another independent bottom-up information system, Withdrawal Student Report System (WSRS), was combined into GNS. Recently, Campus Information System (CIS) is proposing to become the second cooperative subsystem of GNS, which is similar to the WSRS, a bottom-up information response system. At this time, the entire GNS system consists of three subsystems, a database main system (GNS-database), WSRS, and CIS. The three subsystems of GNS as a whole constitute a complete Internet-based computer information system for school counselors and guidance teachers to search the resources they need and to report any emergency to their administrators.



The first and second years of the plan was supervised by Dr. Wu, the chair of the Counseling Center at the National Taiwan University. Dr. Wu's team began this project by taking one of the cities, Hinchu City, as an experiment of an ideal model for the GNS. In his model of GNS, the school as the core of the network served not only as the center of the information, but also as the main user/operator of the GNS. Two subsystems are directly connected and work with schools: the social supporting system (families, relatives, and friends of the pupils) and community resources system (religion group, union group, business, etc.). The second subsystem is a functional subsystem in cooperation with the social guidance and counseling system (related institutes and social workers) and medical network system.

THE GNS-DATABASE

The core of the GNS is a database of information relevant for school counselor use. Through the connection of Internet network, every school guidance worker can acquire the necessary information anytime and anywhere, without the restriction of time and distance. This database is updated periodically, providing the following six categories (subsystems) of resources:

A. Human Resource of Counseling/Guidance

This subsystem collects information of the available human resources in Taiwan, such as college-level lecturers of related fields; i.e., medical doctors, social works, etc.

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1. Medical human resources -- medical doctors, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, social workers.
2. Academic human resources -- counseling center of universities, college professors of psychology, and related fields.
3. Professional teachers in secondary/elementary schools (locally-based)
4. Professional teachers of volunteer programs.
5. Human resources from the institutes/organizations of public social work -- including the public organizations of social-culture, social education, health insurance, vocational counseling, youth-protection/help, etc.
6. The general human resources -- famous writers, speakers, psychologists, etc.

B. Standards for Counseling/Guidance Center

To develop a school guidance system with full-function, the Ministry of Education in Taiwan setup an equipment/space standard for the constitution of a counseling center. Schools can acquire financial support based on the standard of constitution. Considering the distinct needs of counseling and guidance, the standards vary for different academic levels. The related and relevant information on the standards is stored in this sub-section.

C. Document and Literature of Counseling/Guidance

The documentation of counseling and guidance related policies, programs, publications, curriculum designs is important for the practitioners to process their jobs. Therefore, the GNS provides rich information in this section:

1. Laws and policies of government
2. Academic literature -- such as master thesis, doctoral dissertation, special reports of government
3. Journals and magazines
4. Curriculum designs and standards
5. Teaching materials and activities examples
6. Library of counseling and guidance related books
7. Multimedia materials
8. Other pertinent material for school counselor use

D. Activities of Counseling and Guidance

This section collects all records of activities of guidance and counseling work on campuses, such as the special lecture plans and results, the successful experiences of on-the-job-training, workshops, academic meetings and conferences, etc. During the past several years, the Ministry of Education in Taiwan supported many similar activities and acquired numerous classical examples on guidance and counseling work. This subsystem allows for all the obtained information to be exchanged and shared with and among schools.

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E. Assessment and Testing of Counseling/Guidance

The use of psychological tests is an important part of school guidance work. This subsystem contains various types of testing materials and information which can be used to assess for academic difficulties and guidance, developmental deficits and improvement, and career planning and counseling. In this section all kinds of information is provided for the use of each test. For example, in the introduction of each test, the length, purpose, suitable subjects, administration procedures, explanation of results, publisher, price, telephone number and address are also made available. The types of tests mentioned are in the areas of achievement, aptitude, clinical, personality, and intelligence.

F. Analysis of Special Case

This subsystem gathers the serious counseling and guidance cases which are treated by other experts and professionals in the field of psychology. These cases reflect the serious and important concerns and difficulties experienced on our campuses. By studying these cases, the new workers can learn from the experiences of others and experts in the field. These cases will include cases related with drugs, violence, suicide, etc.

THE WITHDRAW STUDENT REPORT SYSTEM

The second part of the GNS is a bottom-up information system for immediate response on the status of a student's enrollment in either secondary and/or elementary school. According to the literature and research, those students who withdraw from school for unknown reasons when they need to be in school and studying, were found to be at high-risk for criminal activities and involvement. Therefore the Ministry of Education came up with a policy to deal with the withdrawn student in 1994 and set up a computer/Internet report system to integrate the schools, polices, and governors. It was decided that as soon as a student withdraws from the classroom for unknown reasons, school teachers have to make a written report to local center of the WSRS. Then the operator of the local center will start up the Internet-based WSRS system to transfer information to local government and police units, cooperatively trying to figure out the story and the reasons for the student's withdrawal and bring him/her back to school.

Currently, there are 23 local centers of the WSRS, with each located in a county in Taiwan. When a student does not show up to school for more than three days, the student information is completed on paper by the school guidance teachers, and then sent to the local center by fax immediately. After this information is keypunched by the operator in the local center, the news and the information about the withdrawn student is transferred directly to the Ministry of Education via the WSRS. The officers in the Council of Guidance and Moral Education download the information every three days and forward the list to local police department to make necessary investigation on the cases. If the students are located, then the information is sent back to the local center for monthly report summary.

For the 1996 academic year, a total number of 8687 withdrawn students (4788 males and 3678 females) were reported through the WSRS; 30% were withdrawn for unknown reasons (disappearance), 70% of these students had specific reasons for withdrawal, such as family

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moving, sickness leave, etc. Most of the withdrawn students (84.5%) were in the secondary schools (junior high school); only 15.5% students were from the elementary schools. Among the 30% of the disappearing students, 54.3% (1421) were located by the school guidance teachers, the police, or the other people, suggesting that the WSRS is indeed a useful system to handle and address the withdrawn students (COGME, 1996).

THE CAMPUS INFORMATION SYSTEM

In addition to the problems of withdrawn students, a more important task of the campus guidance workers is to respond and treat the campus emergencies. These emergencies include, but are not limited to, campus violence and accidents requiring immediate attention, reflecting the dynamic nature of a school life. On the other hand, a systematic collection and analysis of these events could provide a clear understanding of our campuses' culture and possible existing concerns, which might prove helpful not only for the school workers to learn about their students and campus, but also for the governmental agencies and institutions to make the necessary policies and long-term commitment to the important endeavor of guidance and counseling of the youth of our country.

Similar to the WSRS, the CIS is a reporting system which can automatically inform local/central educational administration of special events taking place on a campus, such as student accidents, delinquent behaviors, suicides, etc. According to the first draft of the plan of Internet-CIS, this system has a more clear hierarchy of responding and reporting. As soon as a special event occurs in a school, the operator in this school has to make a report in writing to the local educational department by facsimile. Right after the governor in the local educational department receives the fax, two steps are followed: the receiver makes a report to his/her next highest boss such as the mayor through the administration hierarchy; while another facsimile is made to report the event to still the next higher level in the department of education until the Ministry of Education is made aware of this event.

CONCLUSIONS

School guidance and counseling work in Taiwan still has a long way to go. So far, there is no particular act passed to support the professional development on our campuses. No independent institute is formed or in charge of the guidance and counseling with its special space and budget yet. However, the development of technology on Internet presents a promising and great future for the guidance and counseling workers. Also, it provides a new working style and pattern of helping process. In other words, our educational system is performing a technical reconstruction by taking the guidance and counseling concepts and actions into our technical and information system. This is just the idea of guidance as social reconstruction (Shoben, 1962), in which guidance is a mediator between campuses and society. Counselor's function is to draw students into the traditions of society, and the goal of the guidance is to encourage students to search for values and to live an exemplary life. The powerful and systematic need for communication and connection to people in life are the two major activating forces that will drive us to achieve the above goals in the near future regardless of the practical limitations and obstacles placed ahead and in front of us.

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